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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 DAKAR 000960

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TAGS: [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PU](#) [SNAR](#)
SUBJECT: GUINEA-BISSAU: INTERNATIONAL COCAINE
INVESTIGATION, FAILED COUP D'ETAT, NEW GOVERNMENT

REF: A) DAKAR 641 B) BANJUL 270

Classified By: DCM Kevin Mullaly for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. A whirlwind of events in Guinea-Bissau in the past month have climaxed in an unsuccessful coup d'etat which, combined with a change in cabinet, holds out hope for movement towards legislative elections on 16 November, and may facilitate advances against the increasing dominance of drug traffickers in Guinea-Bissau. Much remains to be done, however, before this influence has been fundamentally rolled back. LEGATT Dakar and DEA Paris contributed to an international effort to collect evidence in the grounded airplane that is suspected of delivering a multi-ton shipment of cocaine (more in septel). The installation of Carlos Correia as Prime Minister could help stabilize the political situation, at least through the legislative elections. Senegalese President Wade credits his appeal (at President Joao Bernardo "Nino" Vieira,s request) that convinced Guinea-Bissau,s Army Chief of Staff Tagme to prevent the coup. END SUMMARY

THE PLANE THAT DIDN'T GET AWAY BUT THE COCAINE THAT DID

¶2. (SBU) On 19 July, several Bissau-Guineans and Venezuelans, one of whom is wanted by Mexico, were arrested in connection with a plane that was unable to leave Bissau after its arrival and two attempted departures, and from which police suspect was offloaded a significant amount of cocaine. Investigation is continuing and events continue to unfold (more in septel.)

THE SUPREME COURT KEEPS THE BALL ROLLING

¶3. (U) As reported in Ref A, the National Assembly, led by the ruling PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cap

Verde), voted to prolong its mandate in order to keep the government in place until the 16 November legislative elections. In an impressive display of judicial authority and separation of powers, the Supreme Court ruled that the prorogation of the Assembly was unconstitutional. The PAIGC withdrew from the governing coalition, thus dissolving the assembly. Former Prime Minister Martinho Dafa and leading opposition parties, notably the PRS (Social Renewal Party) and PUSD (United Social Democratic Party) complained about the ruling, but to no avail.

THE UNSUCCESSFUL COUP D'ETAT

14. (C) Most importantly of all these events, however, was the unsuccessful coup d'etat on August 7. After the President dissolved the cabinet, the head of the armed forces, General Batista Tagme Na Wai, fired and placed under house arrest the head of the Navy, Rear Admiral Jose Americo Bubo Na Tchuto. According to former US Ambassador Blacken, Bubo Na Tchuto, whom many suspect of being the highest ranking person in the armed forces directly involved in drug trafficking, met with head of the armed forces General Batista Tagme Na Wai

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and wanted Tagme to assist him in arresting the President. Tagme told Bubo that he would not support Bubo's plan and then ordered Bubo suspended as Navy Commander and called for Bubo's arrest. Bubo reportedly contacted fellow officers, who refused to back him, before fleeing to the interior. He was placed under house arrest, escaped to the Gambia by boat, and was re-arrested there 11 August. The Gambian government is extraditing him to Guinea-Bissau (Ref B).

PAIGC POLITICS

15. (C) Before this event however, more traditional politics were setting the stage for political fermentation. President of the Republic Joao Bernardo "Nino" Vieira and ruling PAIGC party leader Carlos Gomes Jr. (Cadogo, Jr.) were at odds prior to a June PAIGC Congress, which was postponed twice. However, according to retired American ambassador to and longtime resident in Guinea-Bissau John Blacken (protect), it now appears that President Vieira decided that he needed to work more closely with the PAIGC, including Cadogo, Jr., to effect needed reforms. The government needs to reduce the number of government employees and the number of military officers currently on the payroll. If the PAIGC and the PRD join together and are able to form a majority government after the November elections, reforms including any reduction in force (RIF) would be possible. Following the party Congress, President Vieira and Cadogo appeared on television and raised hands clasped in victory, in an apparent demonstration of solidarity.

16. (U) After the PAIGC Congress, the PAIGC withdrew from the Pact that created the majority in the cabinet, causing the government to fall.

The cabinet included representatives of the PAIGC, the PRA and the PUSD. A transition government was sworn in to govern until the elections. There is no direct evidence that the agreement between Vieira and Cadogo, Jr at the PAIGC Congress and the collapse of the Government relate to the Supreme Court's challenge to the Deputies, extending their own mandate.

DEATH THREATS AGAINST TOP NATIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

¶7. (C) Within days after DEA, Dakar-based FBI and Interpol deployed to Bissau, Minister of Justice Carmelita Pires, Attorney General Luis Manuel Cabral and Judicial Police Director Lucinda Ucarie received telephoned death threats. All have made counter-narcotics trafficking a top law enforcement priority. Manuel Cabral held a press conference on 1 August in which he described two telephoned death threats he received in the middle of the night previous, which he concluded were connected with his anti-drug smuggling efforts and willingness to arrest and prosecute drug dealers and their Bissau-Guinean accomplices. Additional information provided to FBI Dakar determined that the Cabral's callers were fluent in Creole, indicating to all involved that the callers were likely Bissau-Guinean.

REASONS FOR THE COUP

¶8. (C) There were several possible motivating factors behind the coup. The fall of the previous government, with the loss by the

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PRS of the Interior Ministry, which organizes elections, and all other ministries (with two minor exceptions); the ouster of a Balanta party member Prime Minister (Martinho Dafa) who Bissau-Guineans say has "his body in the PAIGC but his soul in the PRS"; and the shift in the balance of power implicit in the outcome of the PAIGC Congress (with Vieira's influence bolstered), were all possible motivating factors behind the coup. Carlos Correia's nomination was not reassuring for the PRS or for other persons involve in narco-trafficking.

THE SHORT TERM EFFECT ON NARCO-TRAFFICKING

¶9. (C) The short term effect of Bubo Na Tchuto's departure from the scene is the loss of an important ally for the Latin American drug traffickers who transship cocaine through Guinea-Bissau to Europe. Possibly, now that Bubo Na Tchuto is out of the game, action can be taken against the others because they can no longer enjoy the protection or support of Bubo. But many are asking if there are other high level officials who are involved in narcotics and what is their level of influence.

A PRIME MINISTER WITH A STRONG MANDATE

¶10. (C) Even if President Vieira has strengthened his position politically, President Vieira relies on Tagme more

than ever
because Tagme saved his already weak presidency by not
agreeing
to help Bubo overthrow the government. Within this very
circumscribed setting Vieira made strong statements
about the importance of good governance, against any illegal
exercise of authority, and declared his full support for
the new Prime Minister to organize November
parliamentary elections during the inauguration
ceremony of the new Prime Minister.

¶11. (SBU) Correia was prime minister twice before and both
times
performed well, according to observers. He is 74 years old
and has a
reputation for integrity and firmness (even though he was
charged
briefly for illegally issuing bonds in 2000). The new
government has some of
the same ministers as the previous one: i.e. Minister of
Finance, Minister of Justice,
Minister of Defense, and the Minister of Natural Resources
and
Environment. The fact that the Minister of Justice has been
retained is a demonstration of support for her efforts
against the traffickers.

COMMENT

¶12. (C) With the arrest and detention of Admiral Bubo Na
Tchuto, drug trafficking has been dealt a temporary blow, but
its influence in Bissau-Guinean public life could recover and
increase if President Vieira, Prime Minister Correia, and the
threatened Attorney General are no longer willing or able
to act on their pledges to improve governance and reduce
the role of cocaine transit in Bissau-Guinean life.
The appearance of international police and investigators
investigating the transshipment of illegal drugs is a
certain sign that the international community is finally
waking up to the cocaine scourge in Guinea-Bissau.
For future response planning, it is clear that

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the attention paid by the international community both
directly and negatively impacted the drug traffickers ability
to operate unfettered. The presence of the international
investigative team, which included the FBI and DEA, allowed
the Judicial Police to press forward with their investigation
despite the palpable tension between the Ministries of
Defense
and Justice. Such a conflict identifies the importance of a
unified and
supportive American and international response if and when a
similar event occurs in Bissau. END COMMENT
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